

A Schubert Programme

SPECIAL
EVENTS

*The Faculty of Music,
University of Toronto*

*Concert Hall,
Edward Johnson Building*

ANTON KUERTI, *Pianist*

Thursday, March 31st, 1966

8:30 p.m.

Programme

MOMENTS MUSICAUX, OP. 94

Moderato

Andantino

Allegro moderato

Moderato

Allegro vivace

Allegretto

These six pieces are in a musical genre new in Schubert's time, to which Beethoven's "bagatelles" already showed the way. If the sonata is the instrumental-music equivalent of the epic in literature, then these pieces may be likened to the short lyric — the spontaneously-written verse or two by Heine or Wordsworth that obeys no particular law of construction, but merely (and with intense feeling) conveys a personal "moment" of creative fancy, a pure "mood", for the receiver to take or leave as the whim strikes him. For slightly larger manifestations, Schubert used the term "impromptu", but for the more modest ones "moment musical". The publisher had some difficulty with his French plurals in the first edition (of two separate books, three pieces to each) in July of 1828, calling them "Momens musicales" on one page, and "Moments musicaux" on another. Two of the pieces had been published in anthologies previously, in 1823 and 1824: the third "Moment" was originally called "Air russe" and the sixth "Plaintes d'un Troubadour".

The basic form of the pieces is that of the arch — a section, b, then a repeated. The pattern is so simple as to lend itself always to individual treatment, found here notably in the variational repeats of No. 2, and in the inimitable harmonic extensions, into major from minor in No. 3, and into minor from major in No. 6. — J.B.

FANTASY IN C MAJOR, OP. 15 ("WANDERER")

Allegro con fuoco, ma non troppo - Adagio - Presto - Allegro

This work, dated November 1822, is one of several (the *Trout* Quintet and *Death and the Maiden* Quartet readily come to mind) in which Schubert used portions of his own already-written songs in larger instrumental frameworks. The second of the four continuous movements of the Fantasy consists of free variations on a fragment from his song *Der Wanderer*, composed in 1806 and published as Op. 4, No. 1. The phrase is that associated with the following verse by the poet Schmidt of Lubeck:

How pale the sunlight seemeth here,
The bloom of life so wan and sere;
The words they utter, empty sound:
A wanderer I, on alien ground.

The song, though perhaps over-rhetorical for today's tastes, and only seldom met with in song-recital programmes, was in Schubert's lifetime one of the handful of works by which his genius was most immediately identified. It appeared in one concert programme after another, and was characteristically referred to as "the favourite", or "the beloved" song, alongside *Erlkonig*, *Gretchen am Spinnrade*, or *Heidenroslein*. Its familiarity partly explains the curious fact that neither on the title page, nor in the composer's letters, nor in contemporary reviews of the Fantasy, is the quotation from the song acknowledged. The subtitle of "Wanderer" was only applied to the piece in much later years — perhaps only when Franz Liszt made his enlargement of it for piano with orchestral accompaniment. Schubert, his publishers, his critics, all referred to it just as "Fantasy in C".

The work's most original musical feature is, however, not the employment of the *Wanderer* theme for that second movement, but rather the over-all design — one of the very first examples (along with some Weber compositions) of the 19th-century "cyclic form" principle. By linking the four movements without a break, and by employing transformations of the same basic "germ motive" in his first, third, and fourth movements, Schubert created a model for the sort of large-scale musical unity Liszt and Schoenberg (to take the two most prominent examples only out of many) were later to turn to so frequently. It may also be noted that the work is technically the most challenging of this composer's piano compositions. A possibly apocryphal anecdote has it that Schubert himself, reading through the piece for some friends, gave up at the octave fugal entries that announce the fourth movement, saying rather impatiently that someone else with more ability could play it. True or

not, the tale is encouragement for any pianist who has ever been defeated by the staying-power demanded in some of the knottier song-accompaniments, let alone this passage of the Fantasy. — J.B.

— INTERMISSION —

SONATA IN G MAJOR, OP. 78, "FANTASY-SONATA"

Molto moderato e cantabile

Andante

Menuetto: Allegro Moderato

Allegretto

In the last three years of his short life, Schubert overflowed, and gave to music a rich harvest of incomparable masterworks. The G Major Sonata, Op. 78, was written at the beginning of this period, in 1826. It has been unjustly overshadowed by the three famous "Posthumous" sonatas of 1828, perhaps because of its more introspective, serene character. While each movement has its passionate outbursts, they always seem to melt back into the tender resignation of the whole.

Originally published as "Fantasie, Andante, Menuetto and Allegretto", the name "Fantasie Sonata" has remained with it, although its form is that of a conventional sonata. The broad opening with its long chords and many rests, which breathe rather than interrupt, clearly establishes the large time-scale of the work. Perhaps the vast modulations in the development do not fall into place with the same clarity of design and goal one finds in Beethoven's modulations, but they have a spontaneity, sometimes dramatic, sometimes merely delicious, which makes up for this. The opening chords are used in the coda without rests and without modulating, bringing the movement to a touching close.

The slow movement is a good example of an easily overlooked aspect of Schubert's genius. He writes superbly for the particular instrument or instruments he has chosen. This movement sings beautifully, but we never have the impression that he wishes he were writing for his favourite instrument, the human voice. This is unmistakably piano writing, just as his string writing has its own character. Schubert never makes us feel that he uses the piano only because he cannot afford an orchestra, as is sometimes the case with Beethoven and other great composers.

The best is yet to come after the charming Menuet and Trio. Few movements in the literature can equal the flowing pastoral joy of this finale. The rondo's main subject returns unruffled after two extended excursions into the Vienna Woods, but in the coda it momentarily loses its patience, and for the first time explodes into the distant key of B flat major. But it is a good-natured explosion, which turns right back into G major, and soon the movement extinguishes itself ever so gently with a last haunting repetition of the repeated notes from its main theme. — A.K.

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